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DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION AND THEATRE
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September 4, 2001

Twink Lynch
1334 SW Lakeside Drive
Topeka, KS 66604

Dear Twink,

I hope this letter will be an acceptable substitute to your recent AKT questionnaire. It seemed to us to be a better, more thorough way of replying to your questions.

The entire theatre faculty at Emporia State University spent some time talking about the survey, and about AKT, at our weekly faculty meeting. Some of us in the group have varying memories of involvement with AKT, most of them very positive, and we've been wondering if the organization still existed and whether or not it was still in good health. Your questionnaire tipped us off that there's some major re-thinking and re-evaluating going on, and we think that's great.

Our faculty believes that one of the reasons that interest and participation in AKT seemed to wane in the 90's, at least for colleges and universities, was that other organizations - which were larger in scope than a state organization - seemed to fill the "networking, festival, convention, workshop, audition" needs that AKT used to fill. Organizations like ATHE, USITT, KCACTF, Mid-America Theatre Association, etc. were more marketable for our time and resources because their net was larger than just Kansas. This "competition" hasn't gone away for colleges and universities, so we thought for a while about what **else** AKT might be in today's climate.

It seems to us (from the outside, anyway) that community theatres might be the most important constituency for AKT. Higher education has all the organizations listed above, and the high schools have a lively Thespian organization in Kansas. And from our perspective, there are only small pockets of real professional theatre work happening in the state. So, the community theatre level seems to us to be the one that could most benefit from AKT. Maybe we're way off base here, and community theatres don't need - or already have - this kind of networking, but this was just our best guess. If that's the case, I hope you're receiving lots of good feedback from the state's many community theatres, large and small, about how AKT could most benefit them.



As for us at ESU, we're happy to say that we'd like to still be involved. In terms of your list of possible functions, for our purposes we'd be glad if AKT did the following things:

- Kept up a strong website on Kansas Theatre, listing every possible professional, college, community and high school production in the state, including times, places, ticket prices, etc. This is a big undertaking, but it's a resource I think all of us would use a LOT. And it would be a great place to send audiences and potential audiences.

- Had an accurate e-list and mailing list in the above categories of theatre (professional, college, community and high school), and especially did the tough work of keeping up with the teachers and staff that change every year. Do you know how long it takes us every year to keep up with the turnover in high school drama teachers? I'd love it if AKT worked hard to keep an accurate list for all of us to use.

- We MIGHT be interested in some unified auditions for summer stock, especially if they included interviews for technical theatre students who might want to work in Emporia for the summer. I think the hardest part of this project is getting enough strong auditionees to commit to coming to the auditions to make it worthwhile for the few theatres in the state who might attend and benefit.

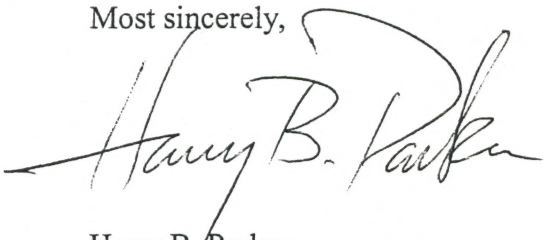
- It's unlikely that we'd be able to bring productions to a Festival with any kind of regularity; with our KCACTF participation, we probably wouldn't want to add another "road show" unless it was an occasional opportunity with a lot of advance notice. We might be interested in serving as a host for an AKT or AACT Festival, with enough warning.

- A convention could be useful, though I think the last few AKT conventions I saw scheduled were in March, right in the middle of either our spring break, or on top of an ESU theatre production. Of course there's no time to schedule a convention that's a perfect time for everyone, but I think some of us might enjoy getting together for the networking, comparing notes, putting-names-with-faces kind of activities that could be beneficial for all of us.

- We're not very interested, nor would we probably want to participate in projects like a script library, training in fundraising and marketing, technical assistance, or ticket discounts.

I hope this "corporate" response from the ESU theatre faculty is helpful. THANK YOU for taking the time to help revitalize AKT!

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry B. Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "H".

Harry B. Parker
Director of Theatre